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BARRAGA: NEWS FROM THE 11TH DISTRICT

From Adversity to a Golden Opportunity

By Suffolk County Legislator Tom Barraga

It is with a great deal of regret that Dowling College after years of financial strife is closing its doors. Certainly the impact on students, faculty and the surrounding community is draconian. The fundamental question is whether there is a future for this beautiful campus and can it be resurrected as a strong four year institution that students will gravitate to and faculty would be proud to be part of. The answer is yes. This campus should become a SUNY four year college, charging the SUNY tuition and backed by the resources of the SUNY system. Currently, we have only one SUNY campus in Suffolk County for the 1,500,000 residents. Stony Brook University is a premiere institution in the huge SUNY system with an admission rate of 37 percent, making it a challenge for many Long Island students to be accepted. Thousands of Suffolk County students will attend Suffolk County Community College for two years or have to apply to a SUNY college in an adjacent County or upstate New York. A SUNY campus in Oakdale could easily accommodate 4,000 full time students, the overwhelming majority coming from Suffolk County. Making the Oakdale campus a four year SUNY school and elevating all three campuses of Suffolk County Community College (Brentwood, Selden, Riverhead) to one four year SUNY institution will provide two new four year SUNY schools that together will have the potential to bestow four year degree programs to upwards of 50,000 students, the majority of which will live in Suffolk County. It has been said that opportunity does not send letters of introduction and procrastination is the game in which opportunity is buried. This challenge to some may seem insurmountable until it is accomplished and then they will say how easy it was to achieve.